

# Dispatcher Communication with the National Weather Service

Produced by the National Weather Service  
Des Moines, IA  
January, 2009



# Objectives

- What is the National Weather Service?
- Why we call
- What we need to know
- When to call us
- Optimizing communication
- Weather Information





# Who are we and what do we do?

- A federal government agency created by Congress, with roots back to the civil war
- Part of NOAA – National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration
- ***Mission: Protection of Life and Property***



# Wait a minute...

## How can we protect lives and property?

- We can't stop the storm.
- We can't knock on every door and tell them it's coming (and neither can you).

## So what can we do?





- Prepare
- Forecasts, watches, advisories, warnings
- Share information

***The goal is for people to make informed and educated decisions for themselves.***



Courtesy NSSL

How does the National Weather Service, a federal agency serving the entire country, protect ***your*** neighborhood?

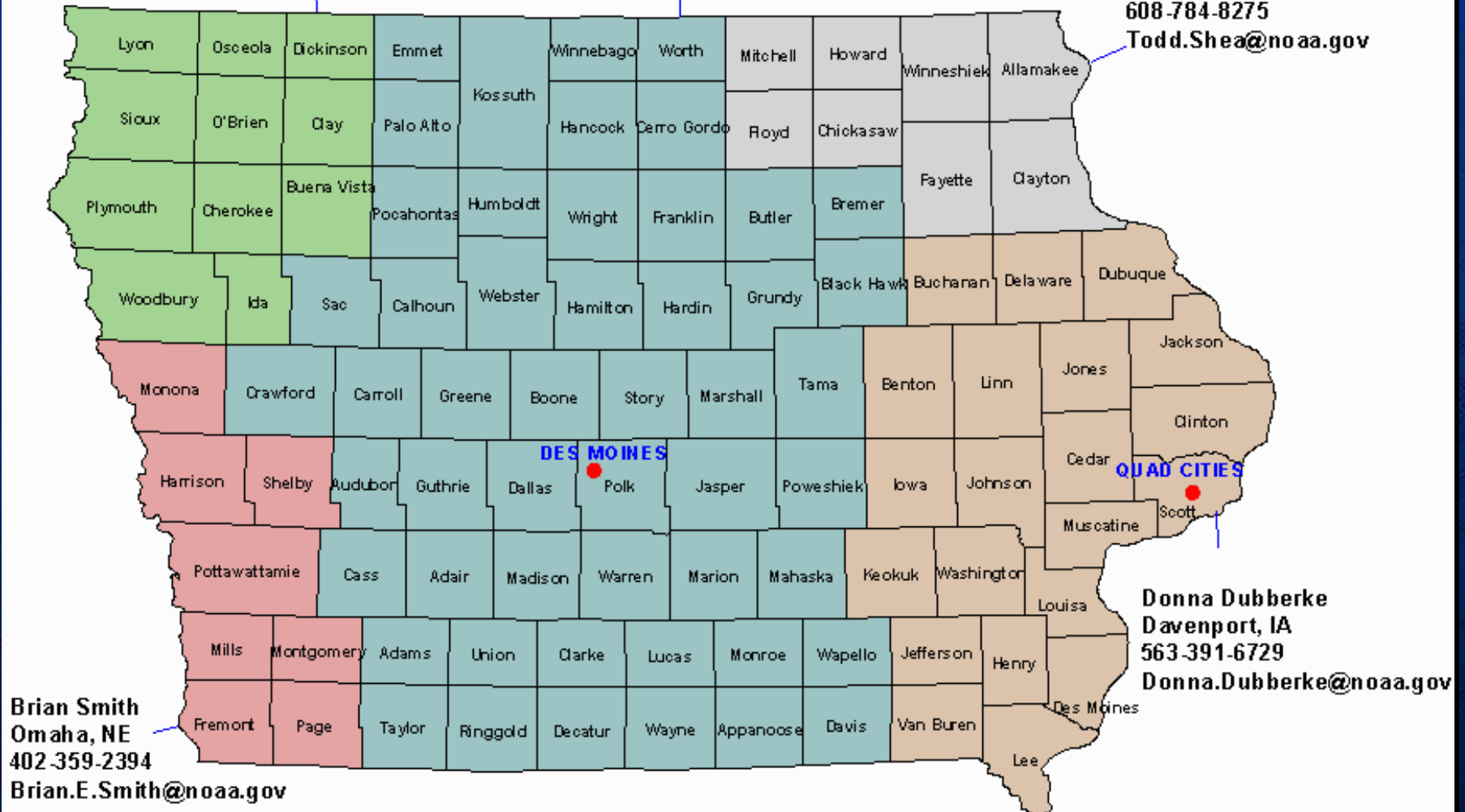




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# Five National Weather Service office's serve Iowa

# So what about your local office?

## Staffing

- Total staff of 23 people
- Variable shift coverage
- Rapidly rotating shifts
- 3 shifts per day



How does this impact communication?



# Why do we call?

It's all about information – You have it and we need it!

Remember our mission? The protection of lives and property. We can't do it alone. We need you, the local experts!

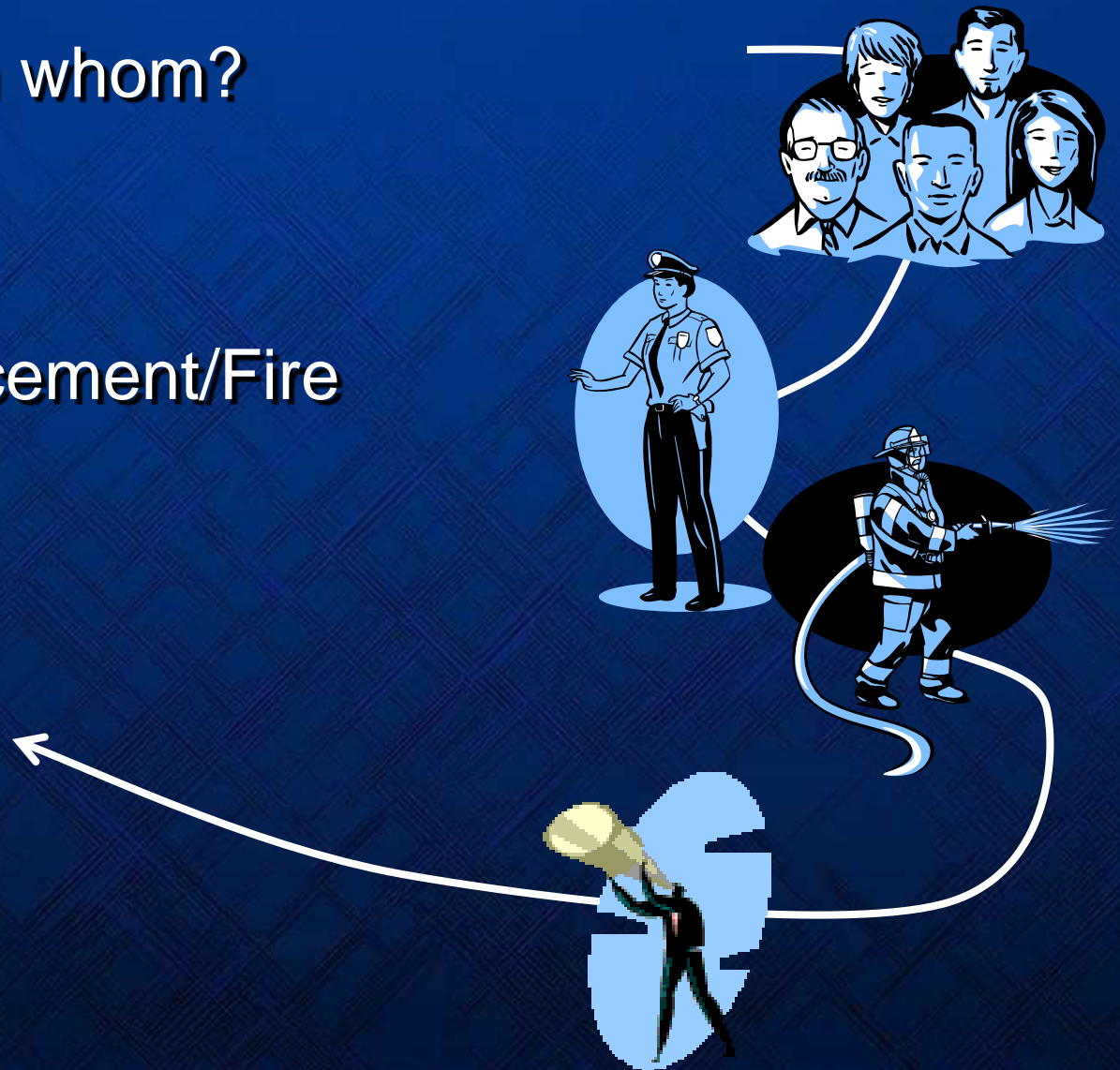
***We monitor the entire area, but we're not at the scene. Radar only sees so much. People who are there tell us the rest.***

# Information Sources

Reports from whom?

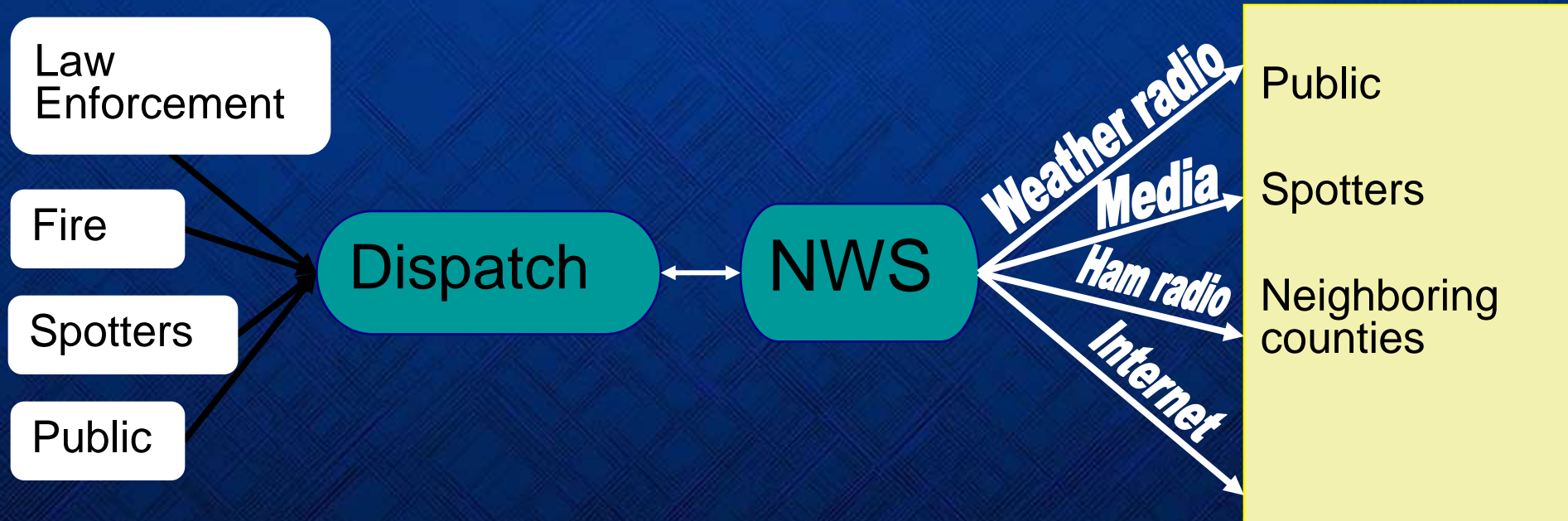
- Public
- Law enforcement/Fire
- Spotters

Credibility?



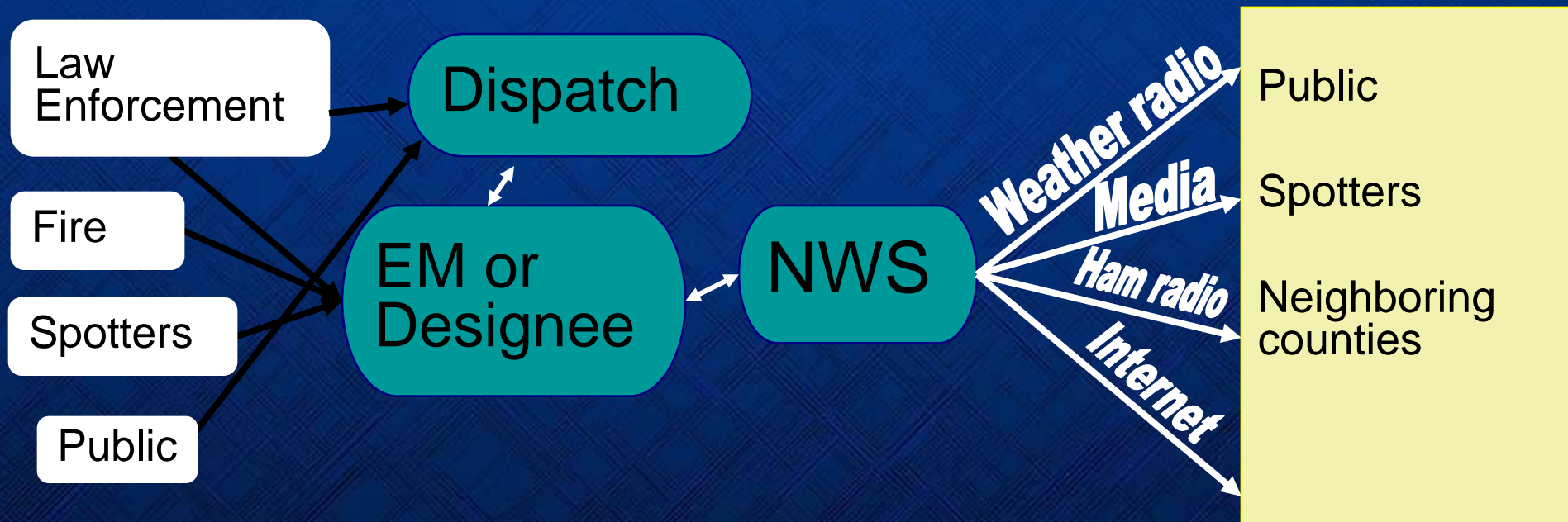


# Making the Most of the Information



People can get the information they need to protect themselves without wasting valuable time (theirs and yours) on the phone when seconds count.

# Making the Most of the Information



In some counties, an emergency manager or designee will *relieve* the dispatch office by coordinating spotters and relaying severe weather reports. This is a *best practice*!



We also provide answers to *your* questions, like:

- Where's it headed?
- What can I expect?
- When will it start?
- When will it be over?



# So what's worth passing along?



Courtesy Brenda Brock



Courtesy NSSL



Courtesy NSSL



# We train spotters to report...

- Wall Cloud
- Funnel cloud, Tornado
- Hail – all sizes
- Wind – above 50 mph
- Damage
- Injuries, Fatalities
- Heavy rainfall
- Flooding
- Heavy snow
- Freezing Precipitation



# What's a Wall Cloud?

Is it persistent?

Is it rotating?

Fast? Slow?



Courtesy of Andy Kula



# Funnel Clouds and Tornadoes

- Location of spotter and the tornado or funnel cloud
- Movement, trend
- Debris?
- Credible source?
- Location of spotter vs actual location of tornado
- If Longitude / Latitude is known, please provide to NWS



Courtesy of Andy Kula

National Weather Service

# Is it Real?



Photo by Josh Roth  
Guttenberg, IA Fire Dept.  
May 31, 2008

This was NOT a tornado!  
Remember, is the source creditable?



# Hail

Not all marbles have been created equal!



Hail sizes in relation to coins, balls

Duration, Quantity?

Any damage or injuries?

# How about Wind?

- **High Winds –**

Estimate Wind Speed based upon damage!

- < 58 mph - Whole trees in motion; twigs and small limbs break off trees
- 58-72 mph – Shingles torn off or minor structural damage; breaks off large limbs; pushes over shallow rooted trees
- 73-112 mph – Substantial roof and structural damage; windows broken; trailer houses overturned; large trees uprooted
- 113+ Roofs torn off houses; weak buildings and trailer houses destroyed; large trees uprooted





# Flooding and Winter Weather

- Rural or urban flooding ...
- Heavy rain or high water ...
- Past water or flood damage ...
- Heavy snowfall or ice amounts ...



Courtesy of Debbi Segina

# Interested in Learning More?

- National Weather Service Storm Spotter Training
- Late February through April each spring
- Required for StormReady Communities
- Two hour training in the evening
- Check our website at [www.weather.gov/desmoines](http://www.weather.gov/desmoines) in January for the spotter training schedule





When to Call

**Anytime!**





It is simply not possible for you to “bug” us.

More calls = High confidence

High confidence = Accurate and Timely Warnings

**Remember that we are here to help you.**



# Will you call us?

We hope so.

- When you have weather-related reports
  - Power outages? road closures? 911 outages?
- Injuries or fatalities
- For county-specific needs (weather, hazmat, other?)
- If you need clarification on a forecast or warning
- To schedule a visit/tour of the National Weather Service
- To let us know how an event went (feedback)

# Will we call you?

Sometimes.

- When we're trying to make a warning decision and need more information
- Post storm follow-up
- Heads-up for dangerous weather if staffing allows
- To confirm a non-weather emergency message request

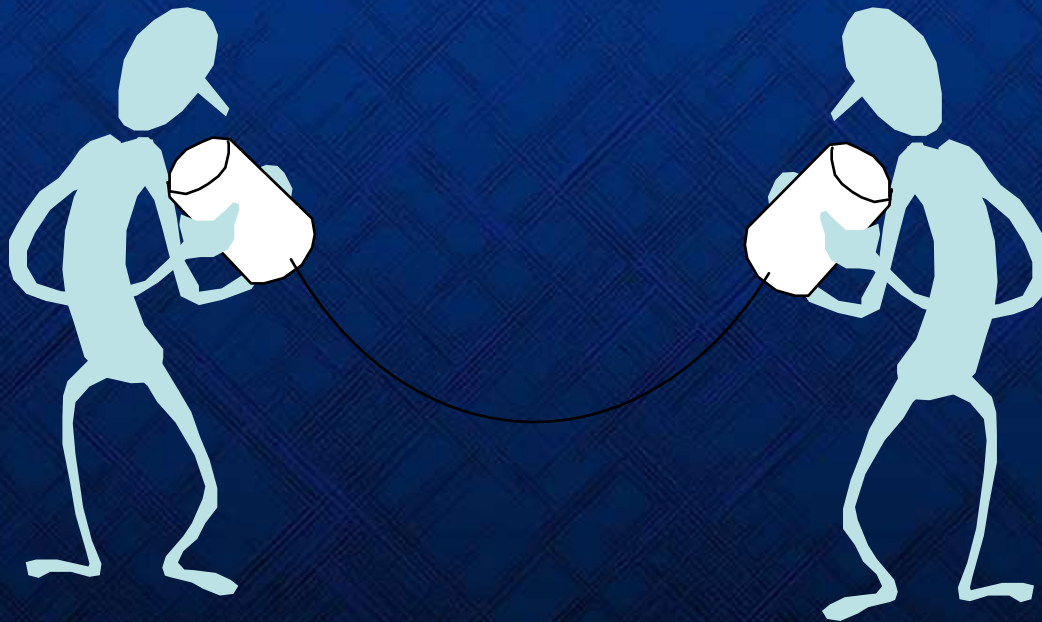


# What happens to the reports at the National Weather Service?

1. Received by staff
2. Integrated with other information (radar, satellite, other reports)
3. Used to “calibrate” radar
4. Helps in warning decision
5. Relayed via warnings, real-time storm reports
6. Web, NOAA Weather Radio and Media relay information

***It's all about getting information to people so they can make the right decisions.***

# How can we optimize communication?





# How to Reach Us

## *Legacy Communications*

Spotter hotline **SKYWARN** number:  
**1-800-SKYWARN (1-800-759-9276)**  
This is the **PREFERRED** number to use!



# How to Reach Us

## *Legacy Communications*

Amateur Radio  
National Weather Service Call-sign:  
**K0DMX**





# NAWAS / IOWAS



# How to Reach Us

## *Legacy Communications*

### MICRN – Metro Incident Command Radio Network



Eight central  
Iowa counties  
with over 40  
agencies on the  
network



# How to Reach Us

## NWS EM Chat

- Private, secure chat and instant messaging service between NWS, dispatch offices and emergency managers.
- Ability to quickly share and view information from NWS and nearby counties.
- Includes automated weather feed which is the fastest way to receive NWS warnings. Feed includes ability to graphically display radar info and exact warning areas. Great for siren activations.
- For additional information contact Senior Forecaster Brad Small at *bradley.small@noaa.gov*.

# Weather Information

## *How to Stay Informed*

Internet

NOAA All Hazards Weather  
Radio

AM/FM Radio

Television





# Weather Information

## *How to Stay Informed*

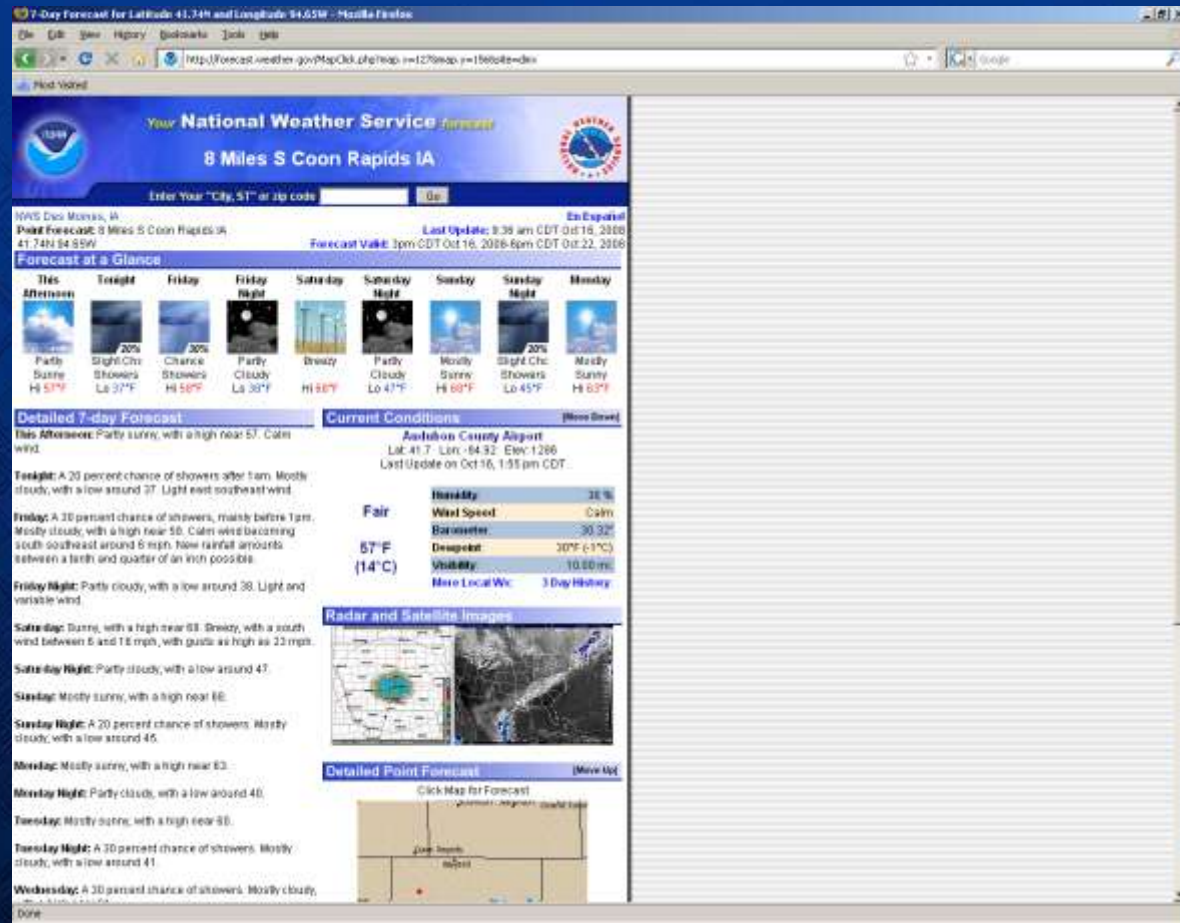
Point and click  
on your county



Internet  
[www.weather.gov/desmoines](http://www.weather.gov/desmoines)

# Weather Information

## How to Stay Informed

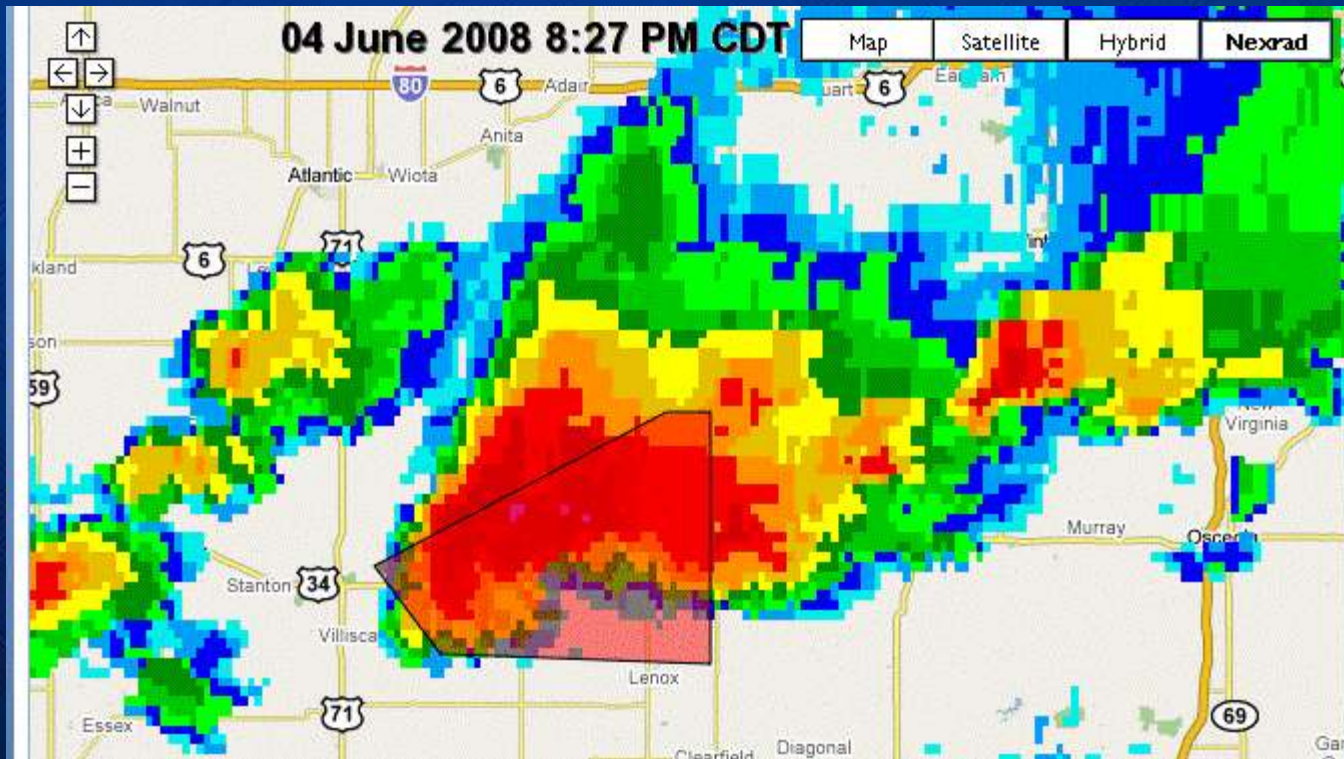


Seven day forecast and current weather  
for your area



# Weather Information

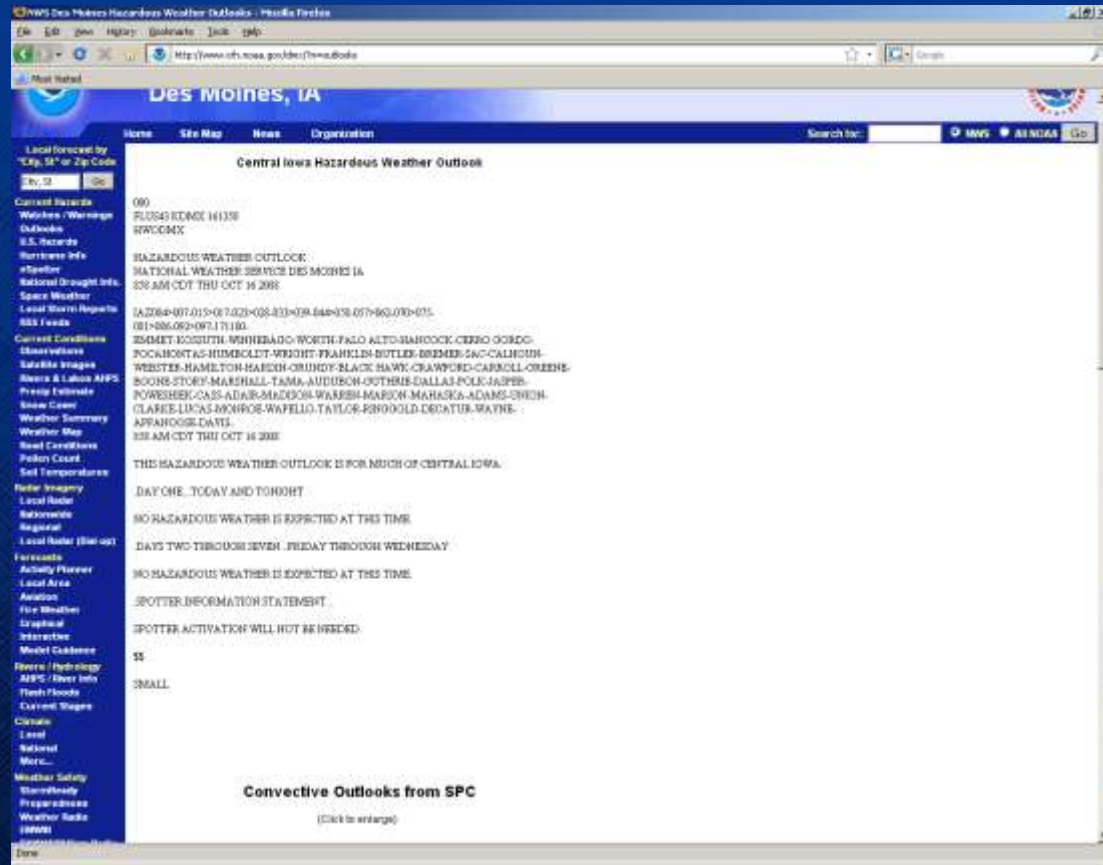
## *How to Stay Informed*



Radar page has tornado, severe thunderstorm and flash flood storm based warnings

# Weather Information

## How to Stay Informed



Outlook page shows the Hazardous Weather Outlook and the Storm Prediction Center severe weather outlooks



# Weather Information

## How to Stay Informed

The screenshot shows the National Weather Service Des Moines, IA website. The page title is "Severe Weather Summary Page". The navigation bar includes links for Home, Site Map, News, and Organization. A search bar is located on the right. The main content area features a map of Iowa with a yellow shaded region indicating a severe weather watch. To the right of the map are links for "Read watches, warnings & outlooks", "National Weather Outlook", and "Radar and Satellite (Click for larger image)". Below the map, there are links for "Tornado Warnings", "Severe Thunderstorm Warnings", and "Flash Flood Warnings". At the bottom, there are links for "Local Area", "Regional", and "National" sections, each with a list of related topics. The footer contains contact information for the NOAA National Weather Service Des Moines, IA Weather Forecast Office, including the address, phone number, fax number, website, and email address. It also includes links for "Disclaimer", "Credits", "Privacy Policy", "About Us", and "Career Opportunities".

Use the [Watches / Warning page](#) during warning situations to keep informed

# We hope you now know...

- Mission: protection of life and property
- You're the local experts (ground truth information)
- All kinds of weather and water hazards are important.
- Call ANYTIME
- Many products and services are available



# Help us improve...

- What could we do better?
- Recent Problems?
- Let us know...
- Call or E-mail:

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515-270-4501 E726

# Thank you!!!



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Des Moines, IA